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UK Statement to the 98th IOM Council 23-26 November 2009

Thank you Mr Chairman,

I am very pleased to be representing the UK at this 98th IOM Council Session. The UK aligns itself with the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union.

Let me begin by extending my thanks to the Director General for his effective leadership and direction of the organisation over the past year, and to offer our continued support for your stated objectives; to strengthen member states' ownership of the Organisation, to promote partnerships and to improve the management of human resources, which is essential to the operational success of the IOM.

In addition I would like to formally welcome the new Deputy Director, with whom we are looking forward to developing a close and productive relationship.

Mr Chairperson

The UK believes that migration policy must be managed to benefit all parties, meeting the labour market needs of host countries while assisting the development of countries of origin, and ensuring mitigation of the adverse consequences associated with irregular migration.

The third Global Forum on Migration and Development held earlier this month in Athens proved to be yet again an excellent opportunity to share and develop practical approaches and solutions to emerging challenges for international migration policy.

The UK was happy to participate also in the conference on labour immigration and circular migration last month in Malmö, kindly hosted and organised by Sweden as the current holder of the EU Presidency. This provided a useful opportunity to consider circular migration and related issues and the discussions there set a positive and constructive tone for taking forward consideration of these matters.

These are all issues in which IOM plays a key role, and in which we are keen to maximise the benefits that a close partnership can deliver. The UK would like to emphasise the importance of IOM's ability to respond effectively, efficiently and swiftly, both to the requirements of member states, and to new challenges that arise in the wider global environment. We think the IOM has a huge contribution to make in the field of operational delivery, where your international network and experienced staff are making a real difference on the ground.

Our relationship with IOM remains firmly centred around the implementation of UK Assisted Voluntary Returns Programmes for those migrants who do not have the right to remain in our country. I am pleased to note that 2009 has been a very successful year for a number of our key returns programmes, greatly assisted by the valuable and extensive network and expertise provided by the Organisation.

Our 'Return and Rebuild' programmes in Afghanistan and Iraq have facilitated an increase in the voluntary return of migrants to Afghanistan and Iraq, which can be attributed to the improvements encompassed in their reintegration package. These innovative changes were a direct response to feedback from migrants involved in the Return and Rebuild scheme, and have allowed returnees to reconstruct properties damaged during the recent conflict. Equally valuable has been the work delivered by IOM in Zimbabwe. The humanitarian difficulties faced by many migrants on returning to this country have been alleviated by the enhanced package we have been able to offer.

However, our relationship with IOM extends further than these essential returns schemes, we also work closely together on a number of projects designed to build capacity in countries of

origin and transit to combat irregular migration and target related humanitarian issues such as human trafficking. IOM is a key partner in two projects that the UK is delivering in the Democratic Republic of Congo - aimed at both reinforcing the DRC's capacity to manage its borders and preventing illegal migration.

In addition, we have recently concluded a project with IOM in East Africa, bringing together officials from all the countries along this irregular migratory route in order to share best practice and encourage cooperation.

2009 has proved to be a year in which, consistent with the Director General's stated objective of improving human resource management, considerable change has been underway within the Organisation. There has been extensive work undertaken during the past few months by the Structural Review Team, and I would like to reiterate our support for the resulting recommendations which have been put forward by the Secretariat. We hope that these changes will strengthen Organisations capacity to respond to the global challenges of migration.

Moving on to the proposed IOM budget for 2010, I would like to encourage the Organisation to take full account of the global economic climate and consider the need for budgetary restraint faced by many member states. We would like to see a realistic compromise reached that will allow the Organisation to function effectively, while being aware that many countries, including the UK, are operating within significantly tighter fiscal constraints.

Mr Chairman

Once again we appreciate this opportunity to take part in the discussion of the current and future challenges faced both by the Organisation, and by its members. We look forward to maintaining and strengthening our partnership in all aspects of a coherent approach to global migration. I would like to conclude by thanking IOM staff around the world who continue to deliver UK objectives in often demanding conditions.